

Day 3 – Self Inflicted Wounds

I guess I did this to myself. There's no one else to blame really. At the Riders' meeting Sunday afternoon, I drilled riders on the five elements needed to claim the Call In bonus: name, rider number, where you were, where you had been and where you were going. I goaded riders with a promise of public admonition for failing to meet the criteria of a bonus akin to getting points for breathing. The instructions would include a small mirror printed with "Fog here – collect 10,000 points." Everyone laughed, nervously. So sure was I to have dozens of Call In screw-ups to skewer today, I slept in this morning and whittled a wooden spear over my coffee while watching a dozen Save-the-Planet protesters picket our hotel for hosting the New Mexico Oil & Gas Coalition Energy Summit. STOP GLOBAL WARMING! LEAVE ROCKS BE!

I amused myself over coffee imagining the furor if they only knew that in a small 47 degree, starting-to-smell, meeting room in the same hotel as the executives of Death to Mother Earth, Inc., a dozen people were orchestrating an event responsible for the burning of 23,925 gallons of fossil fuels simply for the sadistic entertainment of one Mike Kneebone. Then I began listening to the 116 voicemails Tom Austin had forwarded to my email and my perfect day unraveled. 87 riders had called within the appropriate 12 hour window, eventually leaving perfectly completed messages with the call clarity of a Verizon commercial. To my dismay, not a single one missed giving the required information, 25 even calling twice to ensure their information was received. It was as if they were all accomplices in some plot hatched to leave me with nothing to write about. I swear to God Higdon spent the night calling each rider with what to say. That is the only explanation.

Eric Jewell: "I think I'd rather go to Prudhoe Bay on the #%*(@&\$! Haul Road than have to ride that 5.4 miles to the Northern Bridge again (Glen Canyon National Recreation Area). I need a massage, man. I mean my shoulders are *toast*. Anyway, I guess the Iron Butt Rally wouldn't be the Iron Butt Rally without a little dirt, huh. I also don't recommend Grapevine Road as a cutoff from Highway 91 over to Yellowtail Dam either. But, again I had to see what it was like. Having a ball out here. It doesn't suck being on a motorcycle 18 hours a day."

Drew Dill: "Feeling great. Thank everyone for efforts and support. It's an awesome event and I am enjoying participating in it."

Tim Masterson: "Everything's good!"

Andy Mackey: "I am having a WONDERFUL ride. It is fantastic!"

Mark Crane: "My best day of riding Eh-VER! The HAFO bonus (Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument, Hagerman, Idaho) was a hard bonus, not enough points for the amount of effort. But I've had great roads. No cars, except for the cop for 22 miles before John Day (Fossil Beds National Monument, Kimberly, Oregon). But I wanna know if anyone else goes to HAFO."

Danny Dossman: (calling enroute to the Grand Tetons) "I have had a fantastic day and half. I LOVE it. I'm having a blast." While Danny was happy when he called Tuesday, his Wednesday didn't start as well. The shifter linkage on his H-D Ultra Classic broke outside Billings, Montana. When the local dealer wasn't overly interested in providing assistance, Danny's hometown

Horny Toad Harley-Davidson in Temple, Texas, came to the rescue, convincing the local shop to swap out parts from a used stock unit with replacements on the way. Danny is back on the road.

Hammy Tan called twice. Once with his required information.,then again with a 90 second rambling revelation of lessons learned about stopping to pee when you need to. I can only hope he was about to start his rest bonus.

Pat Ford and Rebecca Martinez demonstrated one of the advantages of riding 2-up. As Pat was giving their information, Rebecca is in background yelling "Rider number! RIDER NUMBER!"

Chris Sakala kept calling until he got everything right. 3rd time was the charm.

(Deerslayer) Troy Martin: "I'm rolling. I'm doing good. I'm feeling good. I'm collecting three more bonuses than I had planned and two extra states. I think I'm doing fairly well."

Garry Springgay also encountered deer coming into Little Baker, Nevada. He says he slowed to 10 mph to creep past it. But as he passed the deer, he swears it jumped right at him. So Garry punched the deer in the face, breaking his watch. Garry is fine. The deer was stunned, thinking these Iron Butts really are the World's Toughest Motorcycle Riders.

Heat was a prevailing theme through many of the calls. Larry Meeker noted that he was in an air conditioned McDonald's in Provo Utah at the time. It was 99 degrees. Al Holtsberry calling from Beatty, Nevada, reported the temp in Death Valley was 122, but "felt warmer." Jon Good and Ande Bergman, doing everything 2-up, even left their message together like an answering machine greeting from the 90's. John added they were having lots of fun, but that it was "Goddamned hot out here."

(Hopeless Class) Jack Cheasty: "Hot as blazes out here. Much cooler once I got into Utah. Coming across the Mojave, I thought my tires were going to melt. They didn't. I think my brain did." Jack forgot his Rider number on the first call, but immediately called again with the missing information (repeating all required info) and adding "My brain has finally melted." *Damn, I thought I'd have at least one. Oh, well. There will be more Call In bonuses ahead.*

Jack: "Lisa, I may have to DNF."

Lisa: "Is everything ok? Is it the drive shaft?"

Jack: "No, the bike is just fine. My brain is melted and I don't think I can get back to the checkpoint in time."

Lisa: "Where are you?"

Jack: "Salt Lake City. My GPS says it will take 35 hours to get to the checkpoint."

Lisa: "You're in Salt Lake City and think it will take you 35 hours to ride 599 miles. Is it possible your GPS is still set on your home in Clarksville, Tennessee?"

Jack: (pause) \$&%#! See you tomorrow night.

Jim Owen: "Thank you for that 8 hour rest bonus last night at Moab. It was sweet."

Jim's restful, efficient leg is shaping up to deliver big points with a dip into Texas today to claim most of the same bonuses as Phil Weston. Except Jim is running clockwise collecting bonuses

on his way *back* to the barn whereas Weston has spent the last two days cutting the branches beneath him as he climbs the tree. Weston has cleaned out everything between Albuquerque and New Orleans, leaving him nothing to do but to ride the 1,200 miles back. It also makes us wonder where he will go on Leg Two when he has to ride through the same general area. Maybe he is planning to take a northerly arc to Kingsport?

Will Barclay has ridden an opposite strategy, blasting 1000 miles into Missouri before turning north and west to start collecting big bonuses. But Barclay may be reaching too far too fast, extending into Washington late Wednesday afternoon, leaving him another 1200 miles to ride to make the checkpoint. And that assumes he stops collecting bonuses and just rides a straight speed route. But can this Hoka Hey winner resist the temptation to drop down into Oregon and California and, as Ebby Calvin "Nuke" LaLoosh said, "*announce my presence with authority.*" If he does, he will be in good company as Kirsten Talken-Spaulling appears on that same route, although a few hours ahead.

More interesting could be the route Eric Jewell is taking, having worked his way up to Montana with others, turning east for the big bonus at Little Bighorn with the rest of the kennel. But, since then he's been riding *way* east towards Kansas City, almost Barclay's route in reverse. Allen Hatcher and Troy Martin are also zeroing on that barbecue capital. Every time I announce another rider going to Kansas City, route master Tom Austin snaps to attention and screams "Why?" Greg Rice seems to get it. Bob Lilley, too. Both have turned south to pick their way through South Dakota, Nebraska and Colorado. Craig Brooks has already seen that ground and is now on the west side of the counterclockwise loop looking at maybe reaching the Lake Mead National Recreation Area before nightfall.

Chris McGaffin, late to start Sunday, appears to be finding his route. After seeming to follow Will Barclay towards the Midwest on Monday, he has turned southerly into Louisiana and finally west to cover similar ground as Jim Owen and Phil Weston. More so than anyone else, Chris will be covering old ground for the first day of Leg Two. But, at least he seems like he has a plan which is more than it appeared Sunday morning.

Day One Breakout, Josh Mountain, is easing into the efficiency stage of this leg and now riding a tight route towards the checkpoint. As long as he stays focused he may have outsmarted everyone with a big lead early to arrive at the checkpoint rested and ready to go again. But, when your nickname is NutJob, it's not because you stop to think things through. There's still plenty of time for Josh to overreach.

A final note of concern is the number of riders still heading north this evening. The checkpoint opens Thursday at 8 PM (MDT), with penalty points assessed at 1% of arrival points per minute. Yellowstone is over 900 miles away, as is Little Bighorn. It's time to start heading home, kids. This is just the first leg.

Chris Cimino

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